



U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, Chairman

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

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Contact: Erin Rath/Joshua Shields
(202) 224-6770

HELP COMMITTEE APPROVES BIPARTISAN HEAD START REAUTHORIZATION MEASURE

WASHINGTON- During a full committee markup, The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions today passed a bipartisan measure, negotiated by Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH), that will reauthorize the Head Start program. This legislation is centered on four key principles: improved academic focus and school readiness; improved teacher competency and professional development; better coordination, collaboration and effective kindergarten transition; and enhanced accountability and recognition of performance excellence.

Chairman Gregg stated, "The bipartisan compromise proposal we reached today marks a significant commitment to putting children first. This bill reaffirms the Head Start program's primary purpose: helping to ensure that low-income children have an opportunity to enter school ready to learn with the rest of their peers.

"This bill strengthens the educational component by requiring children in Head Start programs to develop very fundamental early learning skills, including a knowledge of the alphabet, phonological awareness and number recognition. The bill ties local Head Start program goals to the expectation of local public schools and will help facilitate a seamless transition for the children as they enter elementary school.

"Recently, we have heard outrageous stories of Head Start funds- dollars that are specifically set aside for children- being used to pay exorbitant salaries, unnecessary travel and even leases on luxury vehicles for Head Start directors. These practices are clearly not in our children's best interests. This bill sets up guidelines for how Head Start dollars can be spent, and does so in a responsible way.

"I am pleased that we were able to come together and reach a real consensus, and I look forward to continuing on a bipartisan path to moving this legislation along for full Senate consideration. The Head Start program should live up to its title and give children a real head start in life."

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